



Imaginative Reflections

Melvyn Tan's new recording for Onyx reveals connections between Ravel's *Miroirs* and works by Weber, Liszt and Scarlatti

Album evokes pianist's personal recollection of his teacher, who studied with Ravel

'Tan's performance, full of long, graded crescendos and with a convincing large-scale shape, is finely judged and ultimately very persuasive,' review of Liszt's Piano Sonata in B minor recording, *The Guardian*, 29 September 2016

Miroirs is the apt title of Melvyn Tan latest recording, a compelling compilation of works for solo piano by Ravel, Liszt, Weber and Domenico Scarlatti. The new album, set for release on the Onyx label on 26 April 2019, takes its lead from Ravel's *Miroirs*, the French composer's homage to five innovative fellow creative artists. Tan's programme spans three centuries of keyboard history, embracing everything from Scarlatti's Sonatas K.141 and K.119 and Weber's *Invitation to the Dance* to Liszt's *Feux follets*, *Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este* and *Les cloches de Genève* and Ravel's exquisite *Valses nobles et sentimentales*. Its contents reflect the pianist's personal interests, spanning central pillars of his career, from his early studies of Ravel with Vlado Perlemuter and subsequent immersion in music of the late Baroque to his experience with the fortepiano and early 19th-century instruments and mature reflections on the romanticism of Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt.

"I built the programme around the thought that Ravel might have known these pieces at the time he composed *Miroirs*," notes Melvyn Tan. "He was certainly practising *Feux follets* then, and 'Noctuelles', the first of the *Miroirs*, shares virtually the same opening notes. I've taken that as the starting point for a supposition about what else he may have been playing or listening to in the early 1900s. The Scarlatti sonatas both recall guitar writing, and 'La vallée des cloches' at the end of *Miroirs*, includes the same repeated-note figurations. There are so many points of comparison here. And there's a sense in which each of these pieces are like musical mirrors, reflecting certain qualities and moods."

Melvyn Tan owns a direct connection to Ravel through his teacher, Vlado Perlemuter. The Lithuanian-born French pianist studied Ravel's complete solo piano works with the composer and became one of the great interpreters of his music. "Perlemuter had so many fond memories of Ravel," recalls Tan. "His most famous anecdote was of how he was one of the first people to hear *Jeux d'eau*. He was in a harmony lesson with Gabriel Fauré when the young Ravel burst in saying, 'Maître, maître, I've written you a new piece!' Fauré asked Perlemuter if he would mind finishing the lesson early so they could hear Monsieur Ravel's new composition. So they then listened to *Jeux d'eau* for the first time."

While Melvyn Tan has always valued Vlado Perlemuter's teaching, he came to appreciate its legacy more deeply since turning sixty in 2016. "I remember his lessons as if they happened yesterday," he says. "Perlemuter was a lovely man, very kind, very humble, an incredibly nice, grand-fatherly figure. He was not insistent; rather, he would guide you to follow your own route. He was happy so long as he could see you were going in the right direction. That, for me, remains the mark of a fantastic teacher. Working with quite a few contemporary composers, I realise how open they are to making changes to pieces where something doesn't fit the hand or the fingering doesn't quite work. Perlemuter had this flexible attitude and so too, I think, did Ravel."

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Onyx, UK release 26 April 2019

Melvyn Tan piano

Weber *Invitation à la Valse*

Ravel *Valses nobles et sentimentales*

Ravel *Miroirs*

Liszt *Feux follets, Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este, Les cloches de Genève*

Scarlatti Sonatas K141 & 119